



## The kindness of strangers

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**(Mains GS 2 : Development processes and the development industry – the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, institutional and other stakeholders.)**

### Context:

- During the second wave of Covid infections, communities emerged as resilient entities across the country.
- India's ethos, value systems and cultural strengths have automatically generated new energies and scores of new groups.
- Community actions enabled society to overcome the failure of the state and market.

### Institutions encourage community participation:

- The Prime Minister call for active engagement of civil society in coping with the pandemic assumes great significance.
- The empowered group of secretaries has also identified the role of civil society during this period of crisis.
- The task for the NITI Aayog should be to address specific issues involving the pandemic without losing much time.
- NITI Ayog should engage government institutions that encourage public participation and also support new frameworks for crisis management that critically look into the weaknesses and failures of the existing ones in attracting community participation in an effective manner.
- This would also help in NITI's own goal of localisation of development as part of its SDG strategy.

### Facilitate activities of communities:

- NITI Ayog should create mechanisms for facilitating the creation of a required space for community initiatives that are already playing an important role.
- Instead of any new sarkari scheme, it should leverage advanced technologies (ABCD — artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud computing and data analytics) for bridging demand-supply gaps.

- It is time for NITI Ayog to apply the institutional framework where it has to, to rationalise select activities of communities and overcome the failure of the state where it is imminent.

### **Overcome the asymmetric flow of information:**

- NITI should partner with willing state governments to explore the launch of platforms that promote cross-learning and experience-sharing to reduce the cost of operations and to avoid reinventing the wheel.
- This may help in scaling up and, in some cases, overcome the asymmetric flow of information.
- The scope for the usual bureaucratic hassles should be minimised and opportunities for participation of communities in decision making and their implementation at local levels may be explored.

### **Facilitate all actors engagement in development activities:**

- The advantage for NITI is DARPAN, its portal for all voluntary organisations/non-governmental organisations engaged in development activities.
- The challenge would be to work on an ecosystem that facilitates the entry of new actors, which have grown out of new social and economic policies.
- Several informal entities, start-ups and others, at times undefined, may also have to be engaged.

### **NGO's mix results in community participation:**

- At the time of the first Five Year Plan, J D Sethi and other Gandhian economists had called for community participation.
- At that point community groups collected money and supplemented government efforts for development.
- Somehow, over the years these ideas got lost and we ended up with the entities engaged in rent seeking.
- As a result, the approach of community action took the form of NGOs and several of them did not adopt the desired ethics.
- Foreign assistance and ODA inflows facilitated several large-scale projects, but at the same time several of them also ended up with FCRA-related issues.
- But there are several NGOs that contributed remarkably during the migrant labour crisis.

### **Conclusion:**

- However, Community participation still lacks due to information asymmetry on various medical equipment, hospital delivery strategies and lack of clarity over the ever-changing rules and regulations by governments.

- But they play a decisive role in facilitating different spheres of essential needs and providing confidence to society that together with state machinery, the country will overcome Covid pandemic soon.